

social grade had felt their hearts lifted by its breath, from aristocrats and country gentlemen to weavers who, " as they stand in their loom, can set a book before them or edifie one another.<sup>117</sup> But, if religious zeal and moral enthusiasm are not straitened by the vulgar categories of class and income, experience proves, nevertheless, that there are certain kinds of environment in which they burn more bravely than in others, and that, as man is both spirit and body, so different types of religious experience correspond to the varying needs of different social and economic *milieux*. To contemporaries the chosen seat of the Puritan spirit seemed to be those classes in society which combined economic independence, education, and a certain decent pride in their status, revealed at once in a determination to live their own lives, without truckling to earthly superiors, and in a somewhat arrogant contempt for those who, either through weakness of character or through economic helplessness, were less resolute, less vigorous and masterful, than themselves. Such, where the feudal spirit had been weakened by contact with town life and new intellectual currents, were some of the gentry. Such, conspicuously, were the yeomen, " mounted on a high spirit, as being slaves to none,"<sup>8</sup> especially in the freeholding counties of

the east. Such, above all, were the trading classes of the towns, and of those rural districts which had been partially industrialized by the decentralization of the textile and iron industries.

"The King's cause and party," wrote one who described the situation in Bristol in 1645, "were favoured by two extremes in that city ; the one, the wealthy and powerful men, the other, of the basest and lowest sort ; but disgusted by the middle rank, the true and best citizens/'<sup>9</sup> That it was everywhere these classes who were the standard-bearers of Puritanism, is suggested by Professor Usher's statistical estimate of the distribution of Puritan ministers in the